



Fellow Practitioner Issue 370 Dated 5 April 2019

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IN OTHER NEWS

DOUBLE STANDARDS CONTINUE

You don't have to have been in the industry long to remember when the then Government (National) implemented retrospective legislation to make legal that which was illegal and cleared the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board of all wrong doing.

The Minister of Building and Construction at the time allowed the Board to keep the money unlawfully taken from practitioners as it was claimed the Board would be bankrupt if they returned the money.

Seeing this on the internet makes us sick to the stomach at the double standards that Governments implement.

The Corrections Department aims to begin paying back staff for any shortfalls due to complications with the Holidays Act later this year.

It expects a \$16 million contingency it got in last year's Budget should cover

THANKS FROM THE FEDERATION



The Federation thanks all practitioners, and others who support them, for all your hard work and the tireless efforts you put in to protect the health and safety of the public.

We know you have to tolerate unfounded perceptions that all plumbers, gasfitters and drainlayers are filthy rich and are continually trying to rip off the public. We also know that this puts a glass ceiling on what you can charge because if it's too high we simply feed work to the unqualified and unlawful operators.

So who is at fault, practitioners for trying to make a reasonable living or the consumers who don't mind spending unspeakable amounts of money on the luxuries in life?

Have you ever heard of a consumer being taken to court for employing an unauthorised person or for paying a tax and GST exclusive (cash price) for work? That just doesn't happen, however the utmost professionalism is expected of practitioners and the slightest little mistake and we get jumped on.

Day by day the practitioners in our industry protect the health and safety of the public by providing them with the comforts of modern living that they all expect and demand. We provide them with running water, flushing toilets, cooking facilities, heat for their homes, the effective disposal of their waste and the list goes on.

We go above and beyond in all seasons to provide for the public's needs but it isn't very often, if at all, that we get thanked for our efforts especially by the Government whom expect and impose upon us what they want. The Government takes the credit but we do all

its liabilities to more than 9000 staff underpaid due to leave and shiftwork miscalculations.

It's great that see the individuals getting paid money owing to them but it still doesn't help us forgive and forget what was done to us.

It certainly reminds us to keep a close eye on how our industry money is spent.

At the time someone said the Government was using a sledge hammer to crack a walnut and they should be careful as it will continue to bite the Government and the Board in the arse.

And so it continues.

SPEAKING OF MONEY



By now you should have relicensed. If you haven't then get on to it as you will be working illegally and you don't want to give anyone the opportunity to hold you to account.

Relicensing is theoretically the cost we pay to operate in a regulated industry. We all know that the cost we are paying really only covers the policing of the honest people who have relicensed.

This isn't the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board's fault as they don't have the resources to police the entire population of New Zealand and under the

the work and pay to protect the demanding public.

Some practitioners still believe the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board are there for us (some people even think they are members), but that's not the case. The PGDB are there for the public and decisions they make should be made with the public's health and safety first and foremost in mind.

That's why the Federation was formed because the Board lost its way and no one was holding them to account for their decisions. They are Regulators but they still must be fair and that's where every practitioner comes into it - we must all ensure the Board are fair and reasonable and act prudently with OUR money.

When we say "our" money it isn't really because the government have legislated the funding model where they don't contribute but we do, and when it passes from us to the Board it becomes their money but even so they still need to be responsible with the spending.

The Government doesn't seem to hold the Board to account so it's our job, not just the Federation but every practitioner and every membership organisation.

If you see or hear about something the Board has done that you don't agree with then question them about it, or hand the information on to someone who will pose the question to them.

Trust and accountability play a huge part in the regulation of an industry and the Board members need to remember why they are appointed to their respective roles. They also need to realise everyone is watching what they do and that perceptions can be very damaging.

We think back to September 2010 when the Federation was established and remember the turmoil the industry was going through. This included exclusion of individuals and groups that spoke against the Board or held different opinion, an ITO that didn't listen, a Minister of Building and Construction that simply didn't care about our industry or the practitioners, unlawful acts and decisions that appeared to make unusual use of the powers legislated to the Board and the list goes on.

Historical events were looked at but not really to the satisfaction of the complainants and the way issues are going we are building up to another round of historical complaints. Not really what any of us want but it's out of our control because the only power the industry has is through consultation or the complaints process.

We did go through a good period where it looked like change may occur but it seems the patterns of behaviour are returning to times of old. The Federation admits it did drop its guard in the honest belief that times were changing but as soon as we did, old behaviour reared its ugly head.

So we are back to being vigilant and asking the questions that no one

current funding model if they did it would be us, the practitioners, who would be funding it.

So as it stands there is no reward for all the effort put in to getting qualified to work in a regulated industry.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor: I have the theory that Board decisions are being made based on the financial gains of other organisations and that those with money are dictating the direction of the industry for their self gain.

ED: That's a great conspiracy theory that probably has some merit. We'll look into it and get back at a later date.

Dear Editor I read this year's NZ Plumbers Conference is being held in Australia. Apparently the Board is sending people in support of the conference.

Why is industry money being spent to send people to Australia? Surely there are better things to spend our money on.

ED: We tend to agree with you writer.

If Master Plumbers choose to support the Australian economy rather than spending their money in New Zealand then that's their decision but for the Board to be spending money to travel and support their conference then that is questionable.

Definitely sensitive

wants to ask. We know this will affect the relationship that was created over the limited "good time" but we are not prepared to sit back and wait for things to just happen.

People who we are to hold to account seem to fall into a false sense of security because they have done it so many times before that some things are now second nature.

They don't seem to want to back down or admit mistakes so all that is left for practitioners is to take legal action or lay complaints with the likes of the Regulation Review Committee, the Privacy Office or the Ombudsman's Office.

The industry needs to contribute to its own future but legislation doesn't permit us to do that as we are at the mercy of the Government and others they appoint.

EYES OPEN



We mentioned above about keeping your eyes open regarding the actions of others and accountability.

The Federation picked up on this from the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board minutes from their December 2018 meeting – "Sensitive Expenditure Policy."

The Sensitive Expenditure Policy was mentioned in the minutes regarding overseas travel that was approved under the policy. This policy is

so sensitive that it doesn't appear with the other Policies on the Board's website and was requested by the Federation under the Official Information Act.

The Board were very prompt and supplied a copy of the Staff Sensitive Expenditure Policy which was last amended in September 2016.

Here's part of the policy:

PURPOSE

- 1. This policy sets out the rules for staff incurring and approving expenditure that may be sensitive.*
- 2. This policy applies to all Board employees and contractors (collectively referred to as "staff" throughout this policy).*

DEFINITION OF SENSITIVE EXPENDITURE

expenditure.

KEEP OTHERS INFORMED

It only takes 20 minutes every couple of weeks to keep informed so encourage others to get on the Federation's mailing list and keep informed of opinions and actions taken by our section of the industry.

If practitioners don't know then they can't support or oppose actions of the Government, Board and others.

If you have an email address send it to:

wal.gordon@xtra.co.nz

Please include your name, address and telephone number.

If you don't have an email address post your details to the:

Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Federation

PO Box 40-728

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3. Sensitive expenditure is expenditure by staff for a business purpose that may also, or may be seen to also confer a personal benefit on the staff member concerned.

4. Sensitive expenditure also includes expenditure by the Board that could be considered unusual given the Board's purpose and/or functions.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

5. Decisions about Board expenditure that may be sensitive, should:

a. be subject to high standards of probity and financial prudence;

b. be able to withstand audit, and public scrutiny;

c. have a justifiable business purpose;

d. be moderate and conservative, having regard to the circumstances;

e. be transparent;

f. be appropriate in all respects.

In this world we live in where openness and transparency seem to be the top of every organisations list why do we need this policy?

Put simply if the issue is able to withstand audit and public scrutiny then it shouldn't be a problem. If it is that boarder-line that it needs to be treated as being sensitive then perhaps the issue should be avoided.

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